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VI. — *On a Hairy Family in Burmah.* By the Rev.
W. HOUGHTON.

[*Read February 25th, 1868.*]

IT is a fact of common observation, that considerable difference occurs in individuals in respect of the hair which covers parts of the body. Some youths of eighteen years of age, for instance, have abundant whiskers; others of that age, only a slight down; others, no hair at all on the face. It is the same with men of mature age. Luxuriant hair, whiskers, and beard, grow spontaneously in some; others are beardless and whiskerless. We sometimes see great difference in this respect amongst members of the same family. This difference was early noted, as appears from the biblical story of Esau and Jacob; the former being described, even at his birth, as being "all over like a hairy garment." And if we make every allowance for exaggeration, in accordance with Oriental hyperbole in the narrative, there is enough left to show us that the difference in respect of a hairy covering amongst members of the same family was noted in very early times. As far as I have been able to ascertain, very little occurs on this point in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, vii, 2) speaks of an Indian race, known by the name of Choromandæ, which dwell in woods, and have no proper voice; "these people," he adds, "screech in a horrible manner; their bodies are covered with hair; they have sea-green eyes, and teeth like dogs." The same authority speaks of another Indian nation called the Astomi,—the mouthless people,—whose bodies are rough, and covered with hair. There can be no doubt—subtracting the fabulous element from the account—that the descriptions are taken from incorrect reports of some of the man-like apes. The same may, I think, be said of the accounts of the so-called hairy people mentioned by Maundeville, Rigaseta, Peter Martyr, and others, quoted by Aldrovandi. Man-like apes are probably at the bottom of most of the stories. I must mention, however, one exception. Aldrovandi speaks of wild men (wild men were popularly supposed to be hairy) inhabiting Ireland many years ago. His words are:—"Item in Hybernia insula Anglorum regi subjecta infiniti fere homines sylvestres sunt." What kind of men the old naturalist alludes to it is impossible to say; I hazard the conjecture that

they were the primitive stock whence the Fenians have descended.

Aldrovandi has figured some individuals of a hairy family which there was no reason to doubt were historical personages. "Hoc sylvestre genus hominum Bononiæ primum visum est." It appears that this hairy family, which consisted of a father, forty years old, a son twenty, and two daughters, aged respectively eight and twelve years, was brought over by a certain marchioness from the Canary islands. The appearance of one of the girls is thus described:—"The face and forehead were, with the exception of the nostrils and lips, covered with hair; the hair of the forehead was longer and rougher than that which covered the cheeks; the rest of the body, and especially the back, was rough, and covered with yellow hair as far as the loins; the throat, breast, hands, and arms were destitute of hair; the other parts of the body were rough, resembling the skin of birds before they have got their plumage." The subject which I am now to bring before your notice is that of a certain hairy Burmese family, consisting of a mother and two sons, whose photographs I hold in my hand. These shaggy individuals belong simply to one *family*, now living at or near Ava. They are not representatives of a *race* of hairy people, like the Ainos or Kurilians of Yezo and the Kurile islands, which have been described "as the most hairy race of people in the world," and which have, I believe, recently afforded a topic of discussion before the members of this society.

The photographs before me, copies of which are in your hands, were taken by a photographer of Rangoon when at Ava, about a year ago. They were put into my hands by my brother, Captain Richmond Houghton, on his return from Burmah, a short time since. My brother had never seen any of the shaggy family, though he had often met people who had seen them, and had often heard them spoken of. Of their dispositions and occupations he knew nothing. The first mention of this family occurs in a work of the learned and venerable President of this Society, who visited Ava in 1826. In his interesting *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*, he has given a description of a hairy man, whose name was Shwe-Maong, and who was the father of the woman represented by one of the photographs. Mr. Crawford has also given two figures of Shwe-Maong,—one a profile of the face, the other a full length portrait—and a figure of his daughter when a child. Mr. Crawford's account of this curious individual is as follows:—"We had heard much of a person said to be covered all over with hair, and who, it was insisted upon, more re-

sembled an ape than a human being; a description, however, which I am glad to say, was by no means realised by his appearance. Having expressed a curiosity to see this individual, the king politely sent him over to our dwelling some days ago, and Dr. Wallich and I took down on the spot the following account of himself, and his history. His name was Shwe-Maong, and he stated himself to be thirty years of age. He was a native of the district of Maiyong-gyi, a country of Lao, situated on the Saluen, or Martaban river, and three months' journey from Ava. The Saubwa, or chief of the country, presented him to the king, as a curiosity, when a child of five years of age, and he had remained in Ava ever since. His height was five feet three inches and a half, which is about the ordinary stature of the Burmese. His form was slender, if compared with the usually robust make of the Hindoo-Chinese races, and his constitution rather delicate. In his complexion there was nothing remarkable; although upon the whole he was, perhaps, rather fairer than the ordinary run of Burmese. The colour of his eyes was a dark brown, not so intense as that of the ordinary Burman. The same thing may be said of the hair of the head, which was also a little finer in texture and less copious. The whole forehead, the cheeks, the eyelids, the nose, including a portion of the inside, the chin,—in short, the whole face, with the exception of the red portion of the lips, were covered with a fine hair. On the forehead and cheeks this was about eight inches long, and on the nose and chin about four inches. In colour it was of a silvery grey; its texture was silky, lank, and straight. The posterior and interior surface of the ears, with the inside of the external ear, were completely covered with hair of the same description as that on the face, and about eight inches long; it was this chiefly which contributed to give his whole appearance at first sight an unnatural and almost inhuman aspect. He may be strictly said to have had neither eyelashes, eyebrows, nor beard, or at least they were supplanted by the same silky hair which enveloped the whole face. He stated that, when a child, the whole of this singular covering was much fairer than at present. The whole body, with the exception of the hands and feet, was covered with hair of the same texture and colour as that now described, but generally less abundant; it was most plentiful over the spine and shoulders, where it was five inches long; over the breast it was about four inches; it was most scanty on the forearms, the legs, thighs, and abdomen. We thought it not improbable that this singular integument might be periodically or occasionally shed, and inquired, but there was no ground for the surmise; it was quite permanent.

Although but thirty years of age, Shwe-Maong had in some respects the appearance of a man of fifty-five or sixty: this was owing to a singularity connected with the formation of the teeth, and the consequent falling in of the cheeks. On inspecting the mouth, it was discovered that he had in the lower jaw but five teeth,—namely, the four incisors, and the left canine; and in the upper but four, the two outer ones of which partook of the canine form. The molars, or grinders, were of course totally wanting; the gums, where they should have been, were a hard fleshy ridge, and, judging from appearances, there was no alveolar process. The few teeth he had were sound, but rather small, and he had never lost any from disease. He stated, that he did not shed his infantine teeth till he was twenty years of age, when they were succeeded in the usual manner by the present set. He also expressly asserted that he never had any molars, and that he experienced no inconvenience from the want of them.

“The features of this individual were regular and good for a Burmese. The intellectual faculties were by no means deficient; on the contrary, he was a person of very good sense, and his intelligence appeared to us to be rather above than below the ordinary Burmese standard. He gave the following account of the manner in which the hairy covering made its appearance. At his birth, his ears alone were covered with hair, about two inches long, and of a flaxen colour. At six years of age hair began to grow on the body generally, and first on the forehead. He distinctly stated that he did not attain the age of puberty till he was twenty years old.

“Shwe-Maong was married about eight years ago, or when twenty-two years of age; the king, as he stated himself, having made him a present of a wife. By this woman he has had four children, all girls; the eldest died when three years of age, and the second when eleven months old. There was nothing remarkable in their form. The mother, rather a pretty Burman woman, came to us to-day along with her third and fourth child. The eldest, about five years of age, was a striking likeness of her mother, and a pretty interesting child, without any malconformation whatever or, indeed, anything to distinguish her from an ordinary healthy child. She began to teeth at the usual period, and had all her infantine teeth complete at two years of age. The youngest child was about two years and a half old, a very stout, fine infant; she was born with hair within the anterior portion of the ear. At six months old it began to appear all over the ears, and at one year old, on different parts of the body. This hair was of a light flaxen colour, and of a fine silky texture. When two years of age, and not

until then, she got a couple of incisor teeth in each jaw, but had as yet neither canine nor molars. Shwe-Maong assured us that none of his parents or relations, and as far as he knew, none of his countrymen were marked like himself. Our draftsman made very faithful sketches of the father and youngest child, to which I refer. After making the party presents, they took their leave of us, extremely grateful for our attention. Shwe-Maong, he found, had been occasionally employed by the court as a buffoon, having been taught to imitate the antics of a monkey. For these feats, however, the poor fellow does not seem to have been very liberally rewarded; for, to subsist himself and family, he was obliged to betake himself to the trade of a basket-maker, in which he was now employed. He would have turned his monstrosity to better account in London.”

About thirty years after Mr. Crawford's visit to Ava, Captain Yule was sent on a mission to the same place, and found Shwe-Maong's youngest child grown up to womanhood, and a mother of two children. The following is Captain Yule's account:*

“September 18th.—To-day we had a singular visitor at the residency. This was Maphoon, the daughter of Shwé-Maong, the ‘*Homo hirsutus*,’ described and depicted in Crawford's narrative, where a portrait of her as a young child also appears. Not expecting such a visitor, one started and exclaimed involuntarily as there entered what at first sight seemed to be an absolute realisation in the flesh of the dog-headed Anubis. The whole of Maphoon's face was more or less covered with hair. On a part of the cheek and between the nose and mouth this was confined to a short down, but over all the rest of the face was a thick silky hair, of a brown colour, paling about the nose and chin, four or five inches long. At the alæ of the nose, under the eye, and on the cheek bone, this was very fully developed; but it was in and on the ear that it was most extraordinary. Except the extreme upper tip, no part of the ear was visible. All the rest was filled and veiled by a large mass of silky hair, growing apparently out of every part of the external organ, and hanging in a dependent lock to a length of eight or ten inches. The hair over her forehead was brushed so as to blend with the hair of the head, the latter being dressed (as usual with her countrywomen) *à la Chinoise*. It was not so thick as to conceal altogether the forehead. The nose densely covered with hair, as no animal's is that I know

* “A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855,” p. 93-95. By Captain Henry Yule, Bengal Engineers, F.R.G.S. Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858.

of, and with long fine locks curving out and pendent, like the whisps of a fine skye terrier's coat, had a most strange appearance. The beard was pale in colour, and about four inches in length, seemingly very soft and silky. Poor Maphoon's manners were good and modest, her voice soft and feminine, and her expression mild and not unpleasing after the first instinctive repulsion was overcome. Her appearance rather suggested the idea of a pleasant-looking woman masquerading than that of any thing brutal. This discrimination, however, was very difficult to preserve in sketching her likeness, a task which devolved on me to-day in Mr. Grant's absence. On an after visit however, Mr. Grant made a portrait of her which was generally acknowledged to be most successful.*

"Her neck, bosom and arms appeared to be covered with a fine pale down, scarcely visible in some lights. She made a move as if to take off her upper clothing, but reluctantly, and we prevented it. Her husband and two boys accompanied her. The elder boy, about four or five years old, had nothing abnormal about him. The youngest who was fourteen months old and still at the breast was evidently taking after his mother. There was little hair on the head, but the child's ear was full of long silky floss, and it could boast a mustache and beard of pale silky down that would have cheered the heart of many a cornet. In fact the appearance of the child agrees almost exactly with what Mr. Crawford says of Maphoon herself as an infant. This child is thus the third in descent exhibiting this strong peculiarity, and in this third generation, as in the two preceding, the peculiarity has appeared only in one individual. Maphoon has this same dental peculiarity also that her father had, the absence of the canine teeth and grinders, the back part of the gum presenting merely a hard ridge. Still she chews paw like her neighbours. Mr. Camaretta tells some story of an Italian wishing to marry her and take her to Europe, which was not allowed. Should the great Barnum hear of her he would not be so easily thwarted. According to the Woondouk, the king offered a reward to any man who would marry her, but it was long before any one was found bold enough or avaricious enough to venture. Her father, Shwé-Maong, was murdered by robbers many years ago."

The most curious thing about this hairy family is the abnormal character of the teeth, both in the case of Shwé-Maong

* Maphoon had a strong resemblance to the full length portrait of her father in Mr. Crawford's book. The engraving of herself as a child, on the same page, is evidently a failure. It represents an old bearded man, not a hairy infant.

and Maphoon. The former had only five teeth in the lower jaw, viz., the four incisors and the left canine; in the upper only four, the two outer ones of which partook of the canine form—the molars were entirely wanting. Maphoon lacked canine teeth and grinders. It would be interesting to discover whether either of Maphoon's sons exhibit the same or any dental peculiarity. When I first read of this abnormal character of the dental apparatus I was reminded of some remarks of a celebrated living philosopher, on the correlation of hair and teeth. Mr. Darwin, in his most valuable work on the origin of species, in the section relating to correlation of growth, a very mysterious subject indeed, speaks of the relation between the hair and teeth in the naked Turkish dog, and remarks that with respect to this correlation of hair and teeth, "it can hardly be accidental, that if we pick out the two orders of mammalia which are most abnormal in their dermal covering, viz., *Cetaceæ* (whales) and *Edentata* (armadilloes, scaly anteaters, etc.) that these are likewise the most abnormal in the teeth." The Turkish or Egyptian dog is, according to Hamilton Smith, represented by two races, nearly equally destitute of hair; the first belongs to the greyhound stock, having a dull purplish unctuous skin, and in general is deficient in the incisor and canine teeth, and often wants several of the molars. Mr. Darwin in his work just published, *Animals and Plants under Domestication* (vol. ii, p. 326) has, I find, mentioned the case of this Burmese family with their abnormal hair and abnormal teeth, and has given another curious instance of "correlated variability." "Here," he says, "is another case communicated to me by Mr. Wallace, on the authority of Dr. Purland, a dentist. Julia Pastrana, a Spanish dancer, was a remarkably fine woman, but she had a thick masculine beard, and a hairy forehead; she was photographed, and her stuffed skin was exhibited as a show; but what concerns us is that she had in both the upper and lower jaw an irregular double set of teeth, one row being placed within the other, of which Dr. Purland took a cast. From the redundancy of the teeth her mouth projected, and her face had gorilla-like appearance."

The respective ages of Maphoon and her two sons are now about forty-four, eighteen, and fourteen years. The elder boy, it may be noted, now hideously ugly—but perhaps photography has not done him justice—and very abnormal as to his hairy covering, had nothing abnormal about him when he was seen by Col. Yule as a boy of five years old. It is probable I may get further information about this family from a friend of my brother's, Captain Duncan, Inspector General of Police, British Burmah, who has lately returned from Ava to Rangoon.
